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* * *

Launching

She watches him launch it.

Petey, with his skipper
cap, his new toy boat,
a longed-for gift, adjusts
the sails, angles the rudder
till they're just right

for a light breeze. *Cast off!*
When the boat wallows, tips,
sails drenched with silver
dragging it under,
he's running, her son,

to the other side, shouting,
I'll bring you in.
What she, a grown woman,
a mother, couldn't do,
somehow bring her in

or get over to where
her lilac-blue girl
floats in a limbo
like this pool, shallow,
in some lonely marsh

down-hill from heaven.
Lilac-blue. She saw her.
Surfacing from twilight
sleep to rage and great
confusion. Sister Paul

hissing, *You said*
abort, no heartbeat,
Sister Luke pleading, *Please,*
let's baptize it,
while she's thinking, *Breathe,*

breathe in deep
to the baby who flops
in the doctor's hand, who mews
in air when she's slapped,
whose ribs scarcely move,

ribs that luffed like sails
when light air lapses
and wave wash stills
and the outbound ship's
adrift.

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